



CONGREGATIONAL HANDBOOK

RLLC
1992 - 2026

ROCKFORD LAESTADIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

741 Ibarra Avenue NE

Buffalo, MN 55313

Phone: (763) 497-8211

www.rllchurch.org

WELCOME!

Welcome to the Rockford Laestadian Lutheran Church (RLLC). Our mission is to preach the gospel of repentance and remission of sins to the people of our community and throughout the world so that they might become partakers with us of the grace that God offers sin-fallen man in His Son Jesus Christ.

This booklet is provided to you to help you transition into our congregation and provide up to date information for current members. This booklet contains a brief history of our congregation, its organizational structure, duties, and responsibilities of our members, and most importantly how to become a member.

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

We warmly welcome all to freely enjoy the services, activities, and discussions at our church. If you consider this your home congregation, we encourage you to become a member of our congregation.

Membership of RLLC is simply described in the Constitution and Bylaws of our church. This document states that for a person to be a member, they must be in living faith through either remaining in faith from childhood or through new birth through repentance and the forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ Jesus according to the Bible. In addition, a member shall pay the minimum dues amount of \$240 per year to support the Church.

If you want to become a member, we ask that you provide us with a “RLLC Membership Record Form” and to start paying dues as you are able, to support the work of the congregation. The membership form can be found in the Resources tab of the RLLC website. Give your form(s) to any board member or place in the suggestions box in the narthex. Church dues can be paid by cash or check in the donations box in the narthex, or in the collection plate, by credit card

at the bookstore, by Venmo (@RLLC-Donations) or at the church website (www.rllchurch.org) under “Contributions.”

We hope that this handbook is helpful in answering your questions about being a member of RLLC. If you have further questions, please contact any board member. We welcome your comments and questions.

The Board of Trustees

Chairman: Jeremy Glynn
Vice Chairman: Steven Simonson

Secretary: Brett Nikula
Assistant Secretary: Mark Pikkarainen

Treasurer: Robert Loukusa
Assistant Treasurer: Ryan Loukusa

Trustees: Dale Skoog
Keith Laho
Lars Anderson

Ex-Officio Trustees: Allen Pirness
Nealen Jurmu

Recording Secretary: Richard Hendrickson

RLLC SERVICE SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning Services.....	10:30 AM
(Communion Service 1 st Sunday of each month)	
Sunday School (Pre-school – 9 th grade) Sunday at	9:15 AM (Sept – May)
Sunday Evening Service/Discussion	6:30 PM
Wednesday Evening - Bible Class, Song Services, or Home Services (1 st Wednesday in February, April, October and December).....	7:00 PM
Elders' Services	7:00 PM (<i>Mondays,</i> <i>except the 1st Monday of the month</i>)
Havenwood in Buffalo Service (1 st Monday of the Month)	7:00 PM

Special Services

RLLC hosts the following special services during the year.

- Mary's Day Services in March
- St. John's Services in June
- Youth Days in December

Other Congregation Events

RLLC supports spiritual health of the congregation with other non-service events throughout the year.

- Bible Study Day - January
- Couples Day – February
- Ladies Visits – As Scheduled
- Seniors Gatherings – As Scheduled

The current church schedule, as well as access to listen to services online, is on the website (www.rllchurch.org). If there are last minute service schedule changes, they will be communicated via Remind.

PASTORS

Congregation Pastor: Allen Pirness - 763-200-2499

Assistant Pastor: Nealen Jurmu – 612-834-4009

Kofi Agbowada

Jouko Haapsaari

Randall Herrala

Eric Jurmu

Daniel Kumpula

Walt Lampi

Justin Muhonen

Nathan Muhonen

Rod Nikula

Arvin Pirness

Russell Roiko

Rodrick Sorvala

Keith Waaraniemi

SUNDAY SCHOOL & BIBLE SCHOOL

Children attend Sunday School starting 1 year before Kindergarten through the 9th grade. The Sunday School year runs from the 1st Sunday after Labor Day to the last Sunday before Memorial Day. The annual Sunday School picnic is held in the Fall.

Sunday School meets at 9:15 each Sunday morning September - May. Grades Preschool to Second grade meet in the Dining room. Tables are set up for each individual class. Third grade through ninth grade meet in the sanctuary for opening prayers before separating into their individual classes.

The Sunday School has two programs during the year to celebrate Advent, and Christmas. These programs are presented to serve the congregation in learning more about these events. The Sunday School Committee assigns the grades which will present each program.

To enroll your child/children in Sunday School, you may contact Jake Muhonen, Darren McAdams, Luke Simonson, or Katie Jurmu.

BIBLE CLASS

Bible Class meets on Wednesday nights and is intended for the whole congregation. Preschoolers and Kindergartners meet in the coat room. The First and Second graders meet in the Resource room. These two groups each have a short lesson and do a craft. The Third and Fourth graders meet in the Dining Room. The rest of the congregation meets in the sanctuary. The Bible Class lessons for each group are primarily on the same topic. This is intended to encourage family discussion about each lesson.

HOME SERVICES

Home services are held on the 1st Wednesday of February, April, October, and December in area homes. These special services are held to get to know one another better through fellowship around the Word of God and Songs of Zion.

The congregation is divided geographically into groups which fit comfortably in a home. Each group has a representative who is responsible for arranging the service time and location, choosing a discussion topic, and taking a collection at the services for the benefit of the Home and Family diaconal fund.

If you are not part of a Home Service group, you may contact Heidi Hendrickson, 763-276-4332.

BOOKSTORE

A number of LLC publications are available through the RLLC bookstore, located in the narthex. The bookstore is open following all services and Wednesday evening activities. If you do not see an item you are looking for, you may request the bookstore to order it from LLC. A complete listing of publications, including subscriptions, books, and audio publications are located on the LLC website, (www.11church.org). Bookstore sales are limited to items that are directly for the benefit of RLLC or publications distributed by the LLC.

HOME AND FAMILY COMMITTEE

The Home and Family Committee has been established to serve congregation members. Family and Diaconal work is guided by Christ's dual commandment of love: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39)

Family and Diaconal work is the work of the gospel and has always been done. Families and individual believers need support in our time when society, in general, is moving further and further away from God's Word and the teachings of His congregation. In recent years, God's kingdom has seen it good to renew and expand this important work to support one another in faith and in temporal trials.

This work is both of a spiritual and temporal nature. The Committee wants to, not only support congregation members during times of need, for example, health issues, accident, unemployment, financial problems, special needs, etc. but to also help support the lives of faith with "preventative gospel work." Matters are often of a private nature and are handled with confidentiality.

To support the newborn children and their families, the congregation sets aside time during a service each month to acknowledge each newborn baby each month. This announcement includes a prayer and a song for the children born that month. If you would like your baby to be a part of this congregational event please fill out a form in the RLLC resources section of the RLLC website.

Requests, suggestions, or questions may be directed to Committee members, Speakers, or a member of the Board of Trustees. Current Home and Family Committee Members are: Brett & Kelsey Nikula (Chair), Abby Waaraniemi (Secretary), Allen & Jessica Pirness, Sarina Siljander, Aaron and Eeva Nikula, Doug & Martha Forstie, Eerik & Whitney Haapsaari, Jackie Hendrikson, Cale & Nikki Kangas, Phillip & Heidi Loukusa.

RLLC INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

The RLLC communicates with the congregation in many ways including the announcements at each service, the weekly newsletter, and the website.

Service Announcements – RLLC has announcements following each church function. In general, these announcements are limited to church related events and the service schedule. To have an event announced during services, submit the written message to the service director prior to the service.

RLLC Newsletter –The newsletter can be received via email. The newsletter contains the events for the coming weeks including the upcoming service schedule and other church functions. Also, the newsletter provides information about who is being asked to serve during the upcoming weeks. You may submit items to be published in the newsletter by email to rllcnewsletter@gmail.com. Request email versions of the newsletter online through the RLLC Resources tab of the RLLC website.

MEMBERSHIP/RECORD KEEPING

We strive to keep the membership records up to date. If you are new to our congregation, please fill out a membership form. The Membership Form can be found in the Resources tab of the RLLC website. To ensure accurate church records fill out the form completely. If you have a birth, there is a Newborn Child Form in the Resources tab, this birth will be announced before a Sunday service. If there are other family changes (wedding, moved, etc.) we would like to know. Please write a note to rllchurchrecords@gmail.com, or place a note in the “Suggestions” box located on the wall in the Narthex. Thanks for your help!

CHURCH USE AND SCHEDULING

The Board is responsible for planning the use of the Church. The use of the Church is used primarily for Church functions. Private events, such as weddings and anniversary parties may be scheduled by families as required. You may contact the church scheduler or use the scheduling email address rllcscheduling@gmail.com to request a specific date. A donation is appreciated for use of the Church to cover the church expenses. The church rental for members is a suggested donation of \$600 for the entire church. For additional information refer to the RLLC Facility Use Policy in the resources tab of the RLLC website.

FINANCES

Communication on financial matters is an important element of work within the congregation. The Board will provide updates concerning financial matters as necessary to the congregation. A complete financial Annual Report is presented at the Annual Meeting. Questions may be directed to any of the Board members. As approved by the congregation, to be a voting member at the Annual Meeting, \$240 in annual dues are required during the year the annual meeting is covering.

The funds received from the congregation are used to support the work of the congregation and to support the central organization the Laestadian Lutheran Church (LLC).

The RLLC financial support comes from proceeds from individual contributions, fundraising, and collections held at Sunday School, Bible Class, and Services. These funds support the operating expenses of the church, building loan payments and maintenance, minister salaries, LLC dues, and Christian Education expenses.

Financial support in the form of Dues is encouraged for all members. Dues payments can be placed in the collection plate, in the box on the narthex wall, or given directly to Robert Loukusa or Ryan Loukusa. As well, contributions can be made using a Credit Card either at the Bookstore or on the RLLC website, or by using Venmo or Tithley.”

The congregation realizes that each person's financial situation is different, and we encourage each member to freely contribute what his or her personal situation allows.

On behalf of the Rockford congregation members, LLC dues, Stony Lake Camp support and Stony Lake Camp Development (total \$768 annually) are paid for all members who pay at least \$240 in dues to RLLC in a year. These funds are used to support all areas of work supported by the LLC.

Member	Monthly RLLC Dues
Regular	\$135
Retired	\$115
Student	\$70

LAESTADIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Laestadian Lutheran Church (LLC) is the central organization of the Laestadian Lutheran congregations. RLLC is a member congregation and is part of the LLC Midwestern Area and in the camp support area for Stony Lake Camp (Park Rapids, Minnesota). The LLC's primary mission is to spread the gospel to all. This work is done through many areas of work including:

- Pastoral
- Christian Education
- Publications
- Mission work

RLLC is part of the Stony Lake Camp support area. The LLC website contains information about activities held at Stony Lake Camp and other LLC supported services, camps and other activities.

Congregation members are encouraged to support Stony Lake Camp through the annual spring grounds clean-up, building maintenance projects, kitchen service, camp staff positions, and financially through contributions to the RLLC General Fund.

The dues paid to the LLC are as follows:

	<u>per person (18 and older)</u>
LLC Support	\$39.00/month
Stony Lake Camp Support	\$15.00/month
Stony Lake Camp Development	<u>\$10.00/month</u>
Total Monthly per Member	\$64.00/month (\$768/annually)

For additional information about the LLC see the website www.llchurch.org.

CONGREGATION WORK

The RLLC has many activities each week. These activities are organized and executed by volunteers from the congregation. This work is organized into committees. The organizational chart lists each individual committee head, who oversees the subcommittees. As a congregation member, you can volunteer or may be asked to serve on a specific work committee. When you are scheduled to serve, please make it a priority to provide your service. If you are unable to do so, please notify your individual committee head and arrange for a replacement.

For questions or comments pertaining to a particular committee, please contact the committee head listed in the organizational chart or a member of the Board of Trustees.

A few of the committees are as follows:

Coffee Committee

Congregation ladies, confirmation age to 60, are assigned to a coffee committee. These ladies are assigned to work in the kitchen primarily for coffee lunch on a Wednesday or Sunday evening. These committees may also be asked to help serve a meal at special services and other congregational events. Scheduling of committees is published in the newsletter. It is the responsibility of each committee member to note when their committee is scheduled to serve.

Cleaning Committee

Congregation members are assigned to a cleaning crew. The scheduling of cleaning crew(s) is published in the newsletter. It is the responsibility of each committee member to note when their crew is scheduled to serve. Your cleaning crew head will inform you of the actual cleaning schedule and which cleaning tasks you are to complete.

Pasty Committee

Selling pasties is a large source of income. Pasties are baked throughout the year requiring much help. There are pasty crews that do all the tasks from buying of the ingredients to the final packaging. This is a fun way to get to know many in the congregation.

Spring and Fall Markets

Another large fundraising area for the congregation is the two craft and bake sales that occur in the spring and late fall. These sales need many volunteers to be successful. All talents are needed for these a sale. Please watch the announcements for opportunities to volunteer.

Fundraising committee

Fundraisers financially support the work of the Church. Participation in the different events promotes fellowship within the Church. If you have any ideas or would like to participate, contact Sandy Skoog or any member of the fundraising committee.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROCKFORD LAESTADIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

The idea of a new congregation located between Minneapolis and Cokato was first raised in the 1980's, a time during which the Minneapolis Congregation was outgrowing its Plymouth church. More families had started moving west towards Rockford and Buffalo. In May 1990, a group of believers began to gather at the Rockford Township Hall for Bible Class, Song Services, and occasional services.

The RLLC was formally established as a congregation on August 21, 1991, with a total of 53 members. The congregation Constitution and Bylaws were adopted in January 1992. In February 1992, the congregation began to rent the Delano Middle School for Sunday morning services and Sunday School. Dedication Services were held on March 8, 1992.

In December 1992, the congregation accepted a five-acre donation of land from Kalevi and Susan Tarnanen, on which to build a church. Five years later, an additional 5 acres of land were purchased. Planning for the building project and fundraising activities began.

A groundbreaking ceremony for phase 1 (dining hall) was held on March 22, 1998, in conjunction with the RLLC Mary's Day Services. Over the next nine months, the dining hall was built by volunteer construction crews. The congregation started holding services in the dining hall on February 7, 1999.

With continued congregation growth, construction planning for phase 2 (sanctuary) was initiated. A groundbreaking ceremony for the sanctuary was held on May 12, 2002. The sanctuary was also built by volunteer construction crews. The first service was held in the new sanctuary on May 4, 2003.

Dedication services were held June 20-22, 2003, in conjunction with St. John's Services. The Dedication Program included an opening sermon, congregational singing of the Dedication Song "Great King of Glory Come," a history of the congregation and building project, a cantata based on Psalm 127, comments from the chairman of the Board of Trustees, greetings from several sister congregations, and a closing devotion.

Since the beginning of our congregation, we have been blessed with many lay pastors. Ray Waaraniemi and Randall Herrala served as the Pastor and Assistant Pastor faithfully for many years. At the 2007 annual meeting, following several years of congregational consideration, RLLC's first full-time pastor, Jouko Haapsaari was called. In July of that year, Jouko, Pirkko and family moved from Oulunsalo, Finland to serve our congregation. Ray was asked to continue as the Assistant Pastor and Randy's duties continued to serve the congregation as a lay pastor. In 2015, Ray asked to retire from the Assistant Pastor role in which he faithfully served. Richard Nevala was chosen by the Board to support the congregation as the Assistant Pastor.

In January 2013, the Laestadian Lutheran Church of Monticello was established with 72 members primarily coming from RLLC. A farewell service was held in December 2012 to recognize those leaving for the Monticello Congregation. This service was meant to encourage the new congregation and to send them into their new congregation with God's richest blessings.

In 2017, Rockford Laestadian Lutheran Church celebrated its 25th anniversary. The formal celebration occurred during the 2017 St. John's services. The festive services included visiting speakers, support from believers from throughout Zion, and a program to commemorate the 25 years of the congregation.

The RLLC congregation was the host of the 2019 LLC Summer Services. The theme was, "It is I; be not afraid" John 6:20. This was the first summer services that were at the LLC Silver Springs site. The event took much planning but was a joy to prepare for and brought the congregation much closer together.

At the 2021 Annual Meeting, Jouko Haapsaari, gave the request to retire from the work as our full-time pastor. The congregation prayed about this and agreed to hire a new full-time pastor. A search committee was formed, and the congregation was asked to consider this matter and provide names to the committee. After many months of consideration Allen Pirness was contacted. During discussions with Allen, it became apparent that he felt called to this role. The congregation unanimously agreed to his hiring during a meeting of the congregation in January 2022. Allen and Jessica and their children moved to our congregation to start their service in April 2022.

RLLC ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

